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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Letter dated 4 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to draw your attention to paragraph 13 of your report on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned in armed conflict (E/CN.6/2004/6), which contains a number of allegations against Armenia.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time that Azerbaijan has tried to mislead the international community by deliberately disseminating false information and referring to various international organizations. I would particularly like to recall its motion entitled "Prisoners of war and hostages held in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh" submitted to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in 2001. The information provided under that motion was officially denied by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the motion was never adopted by PACE.

I have the honour to inform you that the State Commission of the Republic of Armenia for Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons was established in August 2001. According to its information, there are no women or children imprisoned or taken hostage by Armenia. Meanwhile, since the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, 870 persons have been declared missing from the Armenian side, including 36 women and two children.

As to the allegations of concealing information from international organizations, I would like to refer to the latest available report of the International Committee of the Red Cross issued in 2002, in which, under the section entitled "Southern Caucasus", it is clearly stated that "The ICRC had access to the entire prison population in Armenia ... in Nagorno-Karabakh, the ICRC gained access to all places of detention and to all categories of detainees, whether convicted or not".

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In conclusion, I would like to reassure the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Armenia to cooperating with all parties to the conflict, as well as relevant international organizations, in the search for missing persons.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, under agenda item 3.

(*Signed*) Armen **Martirosyan**
Ambassador
Permanent representative